



# City of Cambridge

16.

IN CITY COUNCIL

August 2, 1993

COUNCILLOR RUSSELL  
MAYOR REEVES  
VICE MAYOR CYR  
COUNCILLOR TOOMEY  
COUNCILLOR WALSH  
COUNCILLOR WOLF

**ORDERED:** That the City Manager be and hereby is directed to provide the City Council with a report regarding our policy regarding health benefits for widows of city employees who do not receive survivors allowance, as described in the attached article from the Retired State, County, and Municipal Employee's Association Newsletter, at our next scheduled council meeting.

In City Council August 2, 1993.  
Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.  
Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:- *D. Margaret Drury*

D. Margaret Drury  
City Clerk

# ESSEX COUNTY RESPONDS TO MEMBER'S COMPLAINT

## Survivors Regain Insurance Rights

"Who says you can't fight city hall," said an exuberant Ralph Ellisson Jr. after being informed that his actions led to the changing of an illegal policy that was in effect in Essex County for the past twenty years. Ellisson contacted our Association last fall when he read in the September edition of *The Voice* that Essex County's requirement that a widow receive a survivor's allowance in order to retain her eligibility for health insurance benefits was illegal.

"If it is true that widows are illegally being denied this benefit then it should be stopped," Ellisson said at the time. He wrote to the Essex County group insurance coordinator who was aware of the rule but unaware of its illegality. Ms. Ann Blood Jean told Mr. Ellisson that the rule had been around for as long as she could remember. "It has never been questioned before," she told him.

Upon being notified that Essex County was engaging in this illegal practice, LICC Director Jim Burke directed that a formal letter detailing the exact nature of the violation be sent to Essex County. After reviewing the documentation supplied by our Association's counsel, the County's attorney, Jonathan Blodgett of Peabody, recommended that the County cease and desist with this practice.

"It is refreshing to meet a management attorney who for once decided to call it quits on a losing proposition before running up exorbitant fees in an effort to scare off widows who are only pursuing what by law they are entitled to," declared Burke.

Ms. Jean recommended that the County search back three years and contact all surviving spouses who were dropped from the health insurance rolls during that period. "Our records do not allow us to go back much further than that but if anyone else comes forward they will be reinstated with no questions asked."

The Essex County Commissioners agreed with the advice given by their attorney and Ms. Jean and effective March 1, 1993 the practice of requiring that surviving spouses receive a survivor's allowance in order stay on the health insurance plan has ended. The change in policy also effects any survivors of cities and towns that participated in the County's health plan.

"It is important that our members be aware that it was



*RALPHELLISSON JR. - Challenge Leads to Victory for Essex County Survivors.*

one of them that got the ball moving on this one," added Burke. If any other member is aware of a discriminatory practice against retirees in their community please contact Jim Burke at the Association. "Please keep your eyes open for any friends or neighbors that are Essex County survivors and who are not receiving a health insurance benefit. Have them contact us at once," said Burke.

Mr. Ellisson was a thirty-three year employee of the County Treasurer's office. He retired as the Assistant County Treasurer over twenty-five years ago. "I was there the day the public employee pension system was instituted; that was January 1, 1937." Ellisson is now 82 and living in Florida with his wife.

### Cambridge, Quincy, Norfolk County Be On Notice

Our Association has already sent notices to Cambridge, Quincy, and Norfolk County regarding this illegal practice. We hoped that the fact the City of Boston and now Essex County have both come clean would encourage other communities to follow suit. "We will notify these communities of the progress that has been made around the state on this issue to see if this doesn't result in some movement," said Burke.

Senate Chairman of the Public Service Committee Sen. Michael Morrissey (D-Quincy) joined with our Association by sending a letter to Quincy's City Solicitor. Morrissey wrote "The City of Quincy's policy is a clear violation of the controlling law and ought not continue."

Responses from both Cambridge and Quincy officials are still expected within the next few weeks. We will keep members updated in the next edition of *The Voice*.

### LUNCHEON MEETINGS

#### Cape

We will hold our annual Cape Cod luncheon meeting at the Tara Hyannis Hotel & Resort, West End Rotary, Hyannis on Friday, June 18, 1993, 12:00 noon. Reservations may be made through Madeline Sullivan, 51-9 South Meadow Village, Carver, 02330, (508) 866-9557, or through our Boston office.

#### Boston

Our annual Boston luncheon meeting will be held at the Parker House, Tremont Street, Boston, on Wednesday, June 23, 1993, 12:00 noon. All reservations must be made in advance by writing or phoning our Association office. Members may also bring guests.

Make your reservations early. Both of these luncheons are always sellouts. Don't be left out.

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V.M. Cyr, Toomey, Walsh, Wolf, Reeves  
Consent Order # 16

cm 241

Councillor Russell re: report on city's  
policy regarding health benefits for  
widows of city employees who do not  
receive survivors allowance.

In City Council,

August 2, 1993

*order adopted*